

IOCU Congress, Bangkok 9 - 14 December 1984

IOCU Congress Resolutions

At the opening session of the IOCU World Congress, the General Assembly passed the following Bhopal Resolution:

Recognising the devastating toll of human life and suffering taken by the worst chemical disaster the world has yet known, the General Assembly deplores the gas leakage tragedy in Bhopal, India, as the latest evidence of the gross lack of care to ensure consumer safety by multinational corporations in Third World countries; and calls upon the appropriate authorities to impose and enforce

stronger environmental and safety regulations; penalties for all who transgress them; and redress and compensation for all who suffer.

Other Resolutions were passed at the final session of the General Assembly. The texts which follow are subject to confirmation as some (Consumer Protection Guidelines, Food, Breastfeeding, and Transnationals) were amended during the Assembly and, although the sense is given here, the precise wording may be marginally different.

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UN Consumer Protection Guidelines

Recognising that protection of consumer interests is a basic human right and an important component in economic development, the IOCU General Assembly welcomes the work undertaken by the United Nations to develop and adopt a world charter of consumer rights - the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection. The IOCU General Assembly strongly urges IOCU to work together with the United Nations Assembly for the wide dissemination of the Guidelines and furthermore to assist governments in implementing the principles contained in the Guidelines. In this connection, IOCU should explore possibilities for establishing a Consumer Protection Advisory Service directed at advising governments and supporting consumer groups on the development and implementation of a consumer protection policy.

Consumer education

This General Assembly, endorsing the Declaration of the IOCU Seminar on Consumer Education in Schools held in Oslo during July 1984, urges IOCU to explore possibilities of creating and maintaining a clearinghouse on consumer education materials, especially for schools. Further, it urges IOCU and its member organisations to ask appropriate government authorities to support special activities for consumer education to make the 1985 International Year of Youth more meaningful.

Lead in petrol

This General Assembly, recalling that Japan has now completely eliminated lead in petrol, that the US has decided to phase out lead in petrol in 1984, and noting that the EEC Member States have just taken the decision on 6th December 1984 to phase out lead in petrol by 1989 at the latest and 1986 at the soonest; noting that Japan and the US have already taken strict measures to lower severely other motor vehicle

emission (such as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxide) and that the EEC is planning to define equivalent measures in 1986:

1. urges the public authorities of all the other countries, including developing countries, to decide to phase out lead in petrol as soon as possible;
2. urges the same countries to define rapidly plans for the progressive lowering of other motor vehicle pollutants;
3. urges the car manufacturers, the oil refiners and the public authorities of Japan, the US and the EEC Member States to apply to the motor vehicles they export and they assemble abroad and to the oil they refine for exportation and refine abroad the same pollution standards they have to respect at home;
4. urges these car manufacturers and oil refiners to develop in this respect new techniques which are less costly than the present ones and, in the meantime, not to raise the over-costly end prices pertaining to these policies more than at home.

Pharmaceuticals

Recognising the unique power of pharmaceutical products to help or harm consumer health; and recalling earlier General Assembly Resolutions on the need to put people's health before any consideration of economic gain; this General Assembly reaffirms IOCU's commitment to work for rational and economic drug policies worldwide and urges IOCU to work to ensure that all medicines have significant therapeutic value; meet real medical need; are acceptably safe; and offer satisfactory value for money. Further, recognising that full and accurate information on drugs is essential for their safe and effective use, this General Assembly urges IOCU to do everything possible to ensure that the supply of drug information to prescribers, dispensers and consumers is improved in both quality and quantity.

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Butazone drugs

Recognising that phenylbutazone and oxyphenbutazone are significantly more dangerous than other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and that they are without important therapeutic advantage for the vast majority of consumers who need such drugs; this General Assembly urges IOCU to press for the complete withdrawal of systemic oxyphenbutazone and the restriction of phenylbutazone to use as a drug of last resort in all countries.

Patients' rights

This General Assembly calls on the health authorities in each country, the associations of medical professions, the medical practitioners and all other organisations and individuals concerned to make their best efforts to uphold patients' dignity and rights as human beings, including the right to accurate information, the right to safety, the right to treatment and care, and also the right to refuse treatment.

Further, it calls on IOCU and its member organisations to formulate proposals to achieve this end both internationally and nationally.

Export of drugs from the US

Whereas safe and effective pharmaceuticals bring significant benefits to the world, and

Whereas pharmaceuticals have a powerful ability both to help and harm, and must therefore be used with care and attention to appropriateness of use, so that benefits will always outweigh risks;

Whereas less developed countries face shortages of trained personnel and resources to analyse risks and benefits, evaluate safety and efficacy, and enforce drug regulatory systems;

Whereas people the world over are affected in the same way by pharmaceuticals, and should not be subject to a "double standard" differing from

the standard in effect where a product is manufactured;

Whereas the world looks to the United States for leadership in consumer protection, and recognises that its policies on pharmaceuticals have served as an example to other countries:

The 11th IOCU World Congress deplores Senate Bill 2878, which was introduced into the United States Congress in 1984; or any similar measure which would have the effect of changing US law to permit the export of pharmaceuticals that are banned, withdrawn or not approved for use in the United States, and

calls on the US Congress to retain a commendable prohibition on the export to any country of unapproved drugs, which is embodied in Section 801 of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Food

As problems concerning food are a central concern for many consumer organisations, this Congress urges IOCU to intensify its activities on food issues and provide systematic support for such activity and in particular to update the resource kit to help stimulate awareness and action around World Food Day on October 16th.

Breast-feeding

This General Assembly, reaffirming IOCU's commitment to the promotion of breast-feeding, invites IOCU offices and its member organisations to take all possible measures to enable their own staff to breast-feed their infants as long as possible by providing adequate maternity leave or adequate opportunity for breast-feeding at the workplace;

urges the International Labor Organisation to revise existing labor conventions with a bearing on this subject in the same sense;

requests IOCU and its member organisations to use their influence on other organisations, institutions and governments to facilitate prolonged breast-feeding.

Consumer Interpol

Recognising that IOCU has a major and long-term commitment towards promoting consumer safety world-wide and that its Consumer Interpol programme has been highly successful in forming a collaborative network of consumer organisations in more than 30 countries for rapid information exchange on newly discovered or newly regulated hazardous products, the IOCU General Assembly confirms its strong support for the Consumer Interpol Programme and encourages IOCU to continue it and to amplify the effects of the programme by broadening IOCU's engagement, including intensification of training of consumer alert receivers, expansion of analyses, studies and briefing papers on product hazards and campaigns concerning policies of manufacturers and traders related to hazards in internationally traded consumer products.

Hazardous products

The General Assembly recalling its resolutions on the export of hazardous products at the 10th IOCU Congress held in June 1981; and bearing in mind its efforts to contribute to an early warning system on unsafe products through the implementation of its programme, "Consumer Interpol"; and noting that there have been a number of recent international initiatives, notably those by the United Nations and some of its agencies and the European Parliament, to deal with the export of potentially hazardous products;

supports the UN General Assembly resolution 37/137 of 17th December 1982 on "Protection Against Products Harmful to Health and the Environment";

commends the UN's continuing work on the "Consolidated List of products whose consumption and/or sale has been banned, withdrawn, severely restricted or not approved by governments";

supports the "Provisional notification scheme for banned and severely restricted chemicals" adopted by the

UNEP Governing Council in May 1984;

supports the European Parliament resolution of 14th October 1983 on the export of various dangerous substances and preparations (especially pesticides);

supports the recommendations relating to the sale of European pharmaceutical products in the Third World, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in October 1983;

calls on all governments to take the necessary steps to bring into effect the UN General Assembly resolution 37/137 and the UNEP Provisional Notification Scheme;

calls on, in particular, the European Economic Community and the Council of Ministers of the EEC to implement the European Parliament resolution and the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in October 1983;

urges IOCU to press for the extension of the principles embodied in these measures to the export of hazardous wastes and technologies;

urges IOCU to investigate the feasibility of preparing an authoritative compilation of hazardous consumer products that have been recalled by importers or manufacturers to complement the United Nations Consolidated List so that we may be better informed and thus able to act.

In addition, this General Assembly firmly supports the principle that product bans should apply equally to products for domestic consumption and for export and that consumers in both the country of manufacture and the country/ies of import should be informed of any exceptions to this rule.

International trade

Recalling earlier General Assembly resolutions on trade protectionism, IOCU reaffirms its general view that freer trade between nations is in the consumer interest. The General Assembly recommends that:

- Governments should be called

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upon to announce a phased programme for the dismantling of those existing trade barriers which have a negative impact on consumers;

- each country should have a body to analyse and publish the costs and benefits of proposed trade controls. Consumer organisations should be represented on such a body, and given funds necessary for the representation to be effective;
- within the general framework of an open international trade, full regard must be had towards protecting consumers against products dangerous to their health or safety.

Tobacco

Whereas tobacco smoking and the diseases it causes have reached epidemic proportions in the developed countries where research has shown that smoking is the largest single preventable factor in ill health and premature death;

whereas tobacco smoking is rapidly gaining ground in developing countries and already signs are visible of what the World Health Organisation calls "tomorrow's epidemic";

whereas health and safety are primary concerns of consumer groups and IOCU;

and whereas IOCU's special areas of knowledge and expertise and that of its member organisations lies in the field of economic surveys, representation of consumers' interests and drafting of consumer protection measures such as legislation and codes;

the General Assembly supports the launch of a campaign to combat smoking promotion which will aim at eliminating the marketing and promotional practices of those engaged in the manufacture and sale of tobacco products, and at taking other measures to significantly reduce the influence of smoking worldwide.

Public relations

This General Assembly recommends that the pack prepared for the 11th Congress Workshop on Designing a PR Brochure should be adapted and edited so that it can be used as a permanent guide to new consumer organisations in developing countries.

Development in Africa

Recognising that consumer protection is an essential part of development, and taking account of the difficulties and complexities involved, this General Assembly resolves that it is important for IOCU to begin systematic work in Africa and to strengthen its efforts in this area.

IOCU Regional Office for Latin America

Recognising that the development of the consumer movement in Latin America is advancing rapidly and acknowledging that this development has been helped by the fact that Latin America is moving towards a greater degree of democracy than was the case in the recent past, the IOCU General Assembly recommends that IOCU sets the establishment of an IOCU Regional Office for Latin America as an important goal and that such an office, if feasible, should be set up before the next IOCU World Congress.

Testing

Recognising the importance of the Simple Tests Manual to smaller organisations, this General Assembly recommends that work on the Simple Tests Manual be continued in order to produce test methods for a greater variety of products and to encourage wider use of the existing Manual. Further, this General Assembly recommends that IOCU seek funds for this second stage of the work.

In addition, this General Assembly proposes that IOCU look into the possibility of setting up a special

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fund to make such a service available to organisations in developing countries, because of the problems posed by unsafe products and the need for tests to be conducted at short notice.

Indian drug policy

In view of the fact that changes to the Indian National Drug Policy are envisaged for the near future, this General Assembly strongly recommends that these changes should be essentially in keeping with the concept of a Rational Drug Policy.

Further, the General Assembly recommends that the interest of the people and their health needs guide the drafting of this policy - ensuring easy availability of essential drugs at reasonable cost and withdrawal of known hazardous and irrational drugs.

Consumer education in the mass media

Bearing in mind that more meaningful co-operation is needed between consumer organisations and journalists in all media, this General Assembly recommends that:

- joint training sessions at regional or national level should be held wherever possible, using existing supportive resources;
- individual consumer organisations should intensify their contacts with appropriate media, as a means of fulfilling their social responsibility to the community in the field of consumer education;
- consumer organisations should more systematically exploit the newsworthy nature of the material they handle;
- consumer organisations should monitor and evaluate the practical long- and short-term effects of the publicity they generate for consumer education in the media;
- appropriate international agencies be urged to facilitate a freer interchange of consumer education materials.

Further, it urges IOCU to appeal to all governments to give greater importance to disseminating consumer information through the various mass media.

Nuclear power

Bearing in mind that the "horizontal proliferation" of nuclear power in developing and developed countries is the cause of grave concern; and noting that the present expansion in the transportation of radioactive substances, such as spent nuclear fuel and plutonium, over land, sea and even through the air, is most hazardous and remains a constant threat of future disaster, this General Assembly calls for a moratorium on the expansion of nuclear power and an end to the transport of all nuclear substances until we are fully assured that safety measures can be guaranteed

New information technology

This General Assembly endorses the programme on new information technology established by its Working Group under the World Conference and urges IOCU to carry that programme out and to report to the next Congress.

IOCU should carry out a feasibility study on a worldwide computerised consumer information database: one obvious subject area for such a database is information about dangerous products.

IOCU should with member organisations explore the feasibility of developing shared computerised information programmes which could be used by organisations in two or more countries, for example on saving energy.

Transnationals

This General Assembly adopts the Report of the Working Group on Transnationals and endorses the Action Plan deriving from the meeting.

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Transnational Working Group Action Plan

Ultimate goals

1. To eliminate the anti-consumer practices of transnational corporations.
2. To ensure that TNCs behave in a manner consistent with the eight consumer rights.
3. To secure effective national and international regulation of TNCs.
4. To ensure that the practices of TNCs are for the greatest advantage of the local population.

Aims

1. To ensure the speedy adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Draft Guidelines on consumer protection.
2. To establish a consumers' Transnational Monitoring Network to monitor the practices of transnational corporations worldwide.

Scope

1. The network will examine the marketing of inappropriate products such as tobacco, alcohol, junk food, and many pesticides, pharmaceutical products and infant formula and related products.
2. The network will examine inappropriate practices and TNCs' behaviour which affects:
 - TNC involvement in local politics;
 - methods of marketing;
 - impact on the lifestyle of local population.

Strategies

1. Lobby nationally and internationally for the speedy implementation of the UN Guidelines.
2. Develop a programme to monitor and disseminate through the network public announcements of TNCs with respect to anti-consumer practices.
3. Document and disseminate information on anti-consumer practices.
4. Develop corporate case studies.
5. Develop a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the action.

IOCU Congress

IOCU council elections

Founder organisations who automatically have seats on IOCU Council are:

- Association des Consommateurs (Belgium)
- Consumentenbond (Netherlands)
- Consumers' Association (UK)
- Consumers Union (USA)

Elected organisations are:

- Australian Consumers' Association

- Consumers' Association of Canada
- Forbrugerradet (Denmark)
- Stiftung Warentest (West Germany)
- Hong Kong Consumer Council
- Consumer Guidance Society of India
- Histadrut Consumers' Protection Authority (Israel)
- Consumers Union of Japan
- Consumers' Association of Penang (Malaysia)
- Asociacion Mexicana de Estudios para la Defensa del Consumidor (Mexico)

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- Consumers Institute (New Zealand)
- Forbrukerradet (Norway)
- Philippine Consumers Movement Inc.

Council members also appointed the National Consumers League of Jamaica and the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh. A further Council seat will be filled by the Organizacion de Consumidores y Usuarios of Spain on 4th April 1985, when it becomes eligible.

Officers

President: Rhoda Karpatkin, Director of US Consumers Union
 Vice-President: Dick Smithies, New Zealand
 Honorary Secretary: Pushpa Motwani, India
 Treasurer: Dick Westendorp, Netherlands

Standing Committees

Testing	Roland Hüttenrauch Stiftung Warentest West Germany
Development	Carlos Sanchez-Reyes OCU, Spain Arturo Lomeli AMDEC, Mexico
Education	Bishan Singh FOMCA, Malaysia, and Grada Hellman Consumentenbond, Netherlands

Working Groups

Health	Andrew Herxheimer Consumers' Association United Kingdom
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Trans-nationals	Allan Asher Australian Consumers' Association
Library and Documenta-tion	Geraldine Ormond Australian Consumers' Association

Consultative Committee

Latin America and Caribbean	Arturo Lomeli AMDEC, Mexico
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New Patrons

Katsuko Nomura - Japan
 Esther Petersen, - United States

New Corresponding Members

Liga de Amas de Casa - Argentina
 Liga Accion del Consumidor - Argentina
 Coordenadoria de Protecao e Orientacao Consumidor - Brazil
 Kuluttajaneuvontaliitto R Y - Finland
 Kentro Prostasias Katanaloton - Greece
 Consumer Education and Research Centre - India
 Jagrat Grahak - India
 Stichting Consument en Veiligheid - Netherlands
 Forbrukerombudet - Norway
 Statens Institutt for Forbruksforskning - Norway
 Instituto Nacional de Defensa do Consumidor - Portugal
 Federacion de Consumidores de Euzkadi - Spain
 Organitzacio de Consumidores i Usuaris de Catalunta - Spain
 Consumers Group of Siam - Thailand
 Thai Association of University Woman - Thailand
 Liga Uruguaya de Defensa del Consumidor Uruguay.

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